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MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

WE have now entered upon the seventeenth year of a war, which in all that time has been interrupted only by a truce of a few months. This continued warfare, unexampled in the annals of our country, during which our men are turned old, and our youth grown up to manhood, seems to have changed the natural aspirations after a peaceful state of society, if not into an actual vindication of the misery brought on multitudes of our fellow creatures thereby, at least into a tacit approval of their measures, who profit by this destructive system. There are many whose ideas have been so habituated to hostility, that they cannot contemplate the probability of a stop being put to it, without the most fearful apprehensions; some from the mere dread and dastardly fear of the disproportioned power of our enemy, while others more culpable, dread the cessation of external pressure as a signal for the people to remember their almost forgotten rights, and the necessity of steps being then taken to alleviate their burthens, and promote the internal happiness and prosperity of the country. The former are to be pitied, for courage is constitutional, and not dependent on an act of the will; but the latter are not equal objects of tenderness, for they have allowed the justest sentiments of the mind and the best affections of the heart to be perverted by motives hostile to the real interests of society.

We have often endeavoured in our sphere to recal men's minds to peaceful habits, by showing the folly of waging an eternal war for no object, or for an object which can never be attained; and Europe is now fast approaching that state when this subject will demand the most serious consideration. It is not too much to suppose that before the end of one year, Bonaparte will have conquered all opposition on the Continent, and that from the Euxine, round to the Baltic and Frozen Ocean, his genius will inform and direct the whole against our means, and our existence. Even before a soldier had passed the Pyrennees, after the ter-

mination of his *Austrian expedition*, the Spanish armies were already destroyed, the English retired to Portugal, and Gerona, their strongest and best defended fortress, had fallen. It would be visionary after this to think that Spain could make an effectual stand against the force by which she will be speedily assailed, or that we could defend Portugal in despite of nature and the *inhabitants*. Were the brave Tyrolians fighting for freedom instead of Francis, the Swiss and the other mountain districts might readily have caught the flame, and Hoeffler, like another Tell, have new-founded the liberties of his country; but, as in the case of Spain, when they applied for English aid, we confined in place of expanding their views, and the cold sympathy which they experience from their neighbours proves the short-sightedness of our policy, and prognosticates their speedy subjugation by the French and Bavarian arms.

The Ottoman empire still exists, but tottering to its foundation, and the descendants of Mahomet and Solymán only wait the active interference of Bonaparte, to resume the original obscurity of their race, and become the Chiefs of a barbarous and insignificant horde.

The pacification of the north of Europe is now completed, and if Sweden be permitted to remain without becoming actually hostile, we must still expect her co-operation in every measure that can be devised for hampering and restraining our commerce. In this quarter of the world, the political horizon does not appear to brighten; and in America the difference which we announced as having taken place between that government and Mr. Jackson, has produced a spirit unfriendly to conciliation, and may turn the dispute, which we once hoped was so happily settled, into a cause of rupture between the countries.*

* A bill has been brought into Congress, read a second time, with little doubt of its being passed into a law, for effectually
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We are sorry to notice a serious misunderstanding subsisting in India betwixt the governor in council of Madras and the army of that presidency, which seems to have originated in some attempt or proposal for the correction of abuses. We are not possessed of sufficient information to ascertain the extent of the evil, the truth of the irregularity complained of, or the prudence of the means employed to remove it, but we may observe two things from this disagreeable occurrence, which have been confirmed by the experience of all ages and countries; that those who profit by abuses would put all to hazard rather than relinquish them, and that large standing armies are *always* dangerous. If they are in a high state of discipline, which may be said of them, in proportion as they approach the nature of machines, having no internal principle of action, but guided entirely by external impulse; the commander in chief by gaining their affection and enforcing his authority might overturn the government; if their discipline is on a lower scale, and they conceive themselves entitled to act as a deliberative body, their obedience will then be uncertain, as their conduct must depend on the opinion which they entertain of the orders given for their government†.

These serious and increasing difficulties would press heavily on the country, even were its affairs conducted by the best abilities in the kingdom, and the people unanimous in their determination to support the government, from a confidence that all its measures were calculated for their advantage. This national confidence is desirable, though perhaps

prohibiting all commercial intercourse between the United States, and Great Britain, France, and their dependencies, *unless* in vessels owned wholly by Citizens of the former country. This, we think, will bring the matter in debate, to a speedy issue.

† It appears by recent accounts from India, that part of the troops having openly mutinied and commenced an attack on some other part of the army, were cut to pieces and that the rest of the disaffected had disagreed among themselves, and submitted to government.

not *absolutely necessary* in quiet and ordinary times; but now when kingdoms and governments are assailed by modes as powerful and dangerous as they are unusual and remarkable, they require supports adequate to the predicament in which they are continually liable to be placed. The principal of these supports is surely unanimity in the determination to maintain the blessings of a good constitution and form of government against all enemies; and when the country is menaced from without, pains should be taken to make the people *feel* that they possess these blessings; or it will be vain to look to them for a determination to support what they do not believe they possess. These are not times for experimenting on the patience, or trifling with the feelings of individuals, and far less should a whole nation be insulted by placing it without the pale of the constitution, and a numerous class of its inhabitants farther bribed to discontent by impolitic and invidious restraints from which the rest of their fellow citizens are free. We are decidedly hostile to the introduction of irrelevant matter into public discussions for the mere purpose of irritation; however when grievances exist it is a duty to state them, and loudly demand redress; that when the day of trial arrives there may be no halting between two opinions, but all be united in defence of their just rights, and in the full determination to transmit them unimpaired to posterity.

ENGLAND.

THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS is an invaluable privilege and one of the firmest supporters of freedom. But it may be abused; and the press by intimidation, or venality may be brought over to be a powerful auxiliary on the side of power; and such in a great degree appears to be its present state. Intimidation was effectually applied towards those connected with the Press, who were known to be advocates of the rights of free discussion. A bookseller in London of well known liberality in his political sentiments was a few years ago, imprisoned nine months because his clerk, unknown to him, had sold a copy of an obnoxious

pamphlet, while another bookseller of less prominent character expiated his offence of selling the same pamphlet, by an imprisonment of only three weeks. At the present moment the Editor and publisher of the Independent Whig, a London paper, are suffering under a sentence of imprisonment for three years, in distant gaols, removed from each other, and from their families and business. These instances of severity are not lost, and intimidation exerts its powerful sway over the whole tribe of writers and publishers. They have to write and publish with the fear of the Attorney General before their eyes, and to exert all the ingenuity they possess to express themselves so guardedly as to keep out of the reach of the inuendoes of the law.

Liberty suffers also from the venality of the press. We shall extract the following description of the press in London, borrowed from one of their periodical publications for last month. "If the people knew generally, that one half of what they read, in newspapers at least, is written purposely to impose on their credulity, and is printed and circulated, *at their expense*, they would turn with equal disgust from the writings of the panegyrists of persons in power, and from those of the defamers of public-spirited individuals:

"Few persons suspect that a majority of the proprietors of the London newspapers, receive regular pensions; that the immediate agents of ministers are the proprietors of some papers; that many of the provincial papers are more or less under the influence of government, or its agents; that the periodical press in general is systematically bought up for the purpose of corrupting public opinion;—and that tens of thousands of pamphlets and squibs in prose and verse, in all manner of shapes, are constantly printed at the expense of men in office, and are distributed gratuitously and post-free, through the nation!—The press is a modern engine in the art of government, and it becomes a question of great importance whether more mischief may not be effected against the rights and interests of a people, by the extensive means

possessed by governments of polluting the sources of public intelligence, than is derived of benefit from the unprotected and misrepresented exertions of individuals, in maintaining the cause of truth and public liberty."

The advocates of liberty have many difficulties to surmount, arising from the apathy of the people, and the strenuous exertions of the trained bands of power; such are the fearful odds against freedom and reform. For how do the people act on this emergency? Many tamely lend their aid to the side of power. They wish to be deceived; and if an independent print is advanced to publish bold, unpalatable truths, it is left unsupported, with a diminished sale, scarcely adequate to pay expenses, and if a prosecution were threatened many would rejoice, and even the few who feebly and timidly hold sentiments of freedom, shut up as in a hidden closet, but who are afraid to avow themselves, would stand by with all the frigid apathy of unconcerned spectators; while some would give a ready ear, as in the case of Wardle, to all the calumnies with which the advocates of power delight to load their opposers.

The supporters of power have all the advantages of acting together in concert, and of being drilled into the ranks of a regular system, while the advocates of reform, suffer from a want of union, each being more desirous to advance his own peculiar system, than to sacrifice to the general good, by promoting unanimity.—Thus disunited, and standing alone, they are ill matched against the regular phalanx. Reform has to encounter, not only the opposition and obloquy of avowed enemies, but also the scarcely less injurious difficulties of timid friends. With some, reform is a mere name, and nothing else, they say they are *for* reform, but name any specific plan, they immediately draw off, and are fertile in plausible objections: thus manifesting that they only are for reform in words, while in reality they are its determined opponents:

"They reformation much approv'd,
About it never falter'd,

And wish'd all things to be improv'd
But in no little alter'd".

In the course of the narration of public events, we have repeatedly alluded to the celebration of the jubilee, and were not backward in our duty in representing it, as we really conceived it to be, a trick to lead away from the consideration of the alarming situation of public affairs. We shall again advert to the subject without fear of tiring our readers, and select for their information from one of the few independent periodical prints, *The Repository of Theology and General Literature*, a review of the manner in which this day was celebrated. If such a review produce reflection, and lessen the cullibility of the public mind, so that the people may not be so liable to be duped on a recurrence of a similar occasion, our pages will not have been uselessly occupied.

"We always considered the late jubilee as a political measure, designed to prop up a falling faction; and therefore hoped that none but political religionists would celebrate it by public worship. The 25th of October was in fact, not a Jewish, nor a Romish, nor a British Jubilee: few, if any, acts of grace, similar to those performed in the 50th year of his reign, by Henry III. and of his age by Edward III. were recommended on this occasion by the King's advisers. The jubilee was wholly intended to divert the public from the consideration of the state of administration and of the country, and it partly answered the purpose, yet there were those who saw, or thought they saw in the mode of the observance of this day of rejoicing, symptoms of good sense and resolution in the public, which would presently break through all the barriers opposed to political inquiry, and demand "indemnity for the past, and security for the future." It was the intention of the projectors of the jubilee to have a general illumination; but this measure appeared, on its being proposed, so ill-suited to the popular feeling, that it was agreed in most places to substitute for it a subscription to the poor. In the metropolis, where the public buildings were

splendidly lighted up, the fears of some of the inhabitants led them to resort to the tallow-chandler, that they might not be put to the necessity of calling in the glazier; but there never was an illumination so partial and spiritless. In one particular, the jubilee was a good day, as it brought a full meal to the mouths of those whom the jubilee-proposers had long doomed, by their measures, to subsist on half a meal; though this loyal charity disclosed the melancholy fact, that nearly a moiety of the population of the country are reduced to a condition, in which the present of a single comfortable dinner, is a gladdening favour. At York, which has a population of 18,000 souls, 8000 applied in *forma pauperis* for the jubilee-charity. At Maidstone, where is a population of 10,000 there were above 5000 who accepted the same relief.

The soldiery were called out to fire *feus de joye*; and some of the commanders of volunteer corps refused leave of absence to the sick of their respective regiments. The merchants and bankers of London, including the whole body of contractors, loan jobbers, commissioners of excise and of the income tax, and their dependents, held a turtle feast at Merchant Taylor's hall; and the common council of the city of London, were regaled at the Mansion-house, on a plan agreed upon after several hours discussion in the worshipful assembly, with roast beef. The churches were all opened, as were nearly all the Methodist chapels, and the greater part of the meeting-houses. In some of the churches and chapels the pious hymn of "God save the King" was sung, the congregation joining in full chorus. It is said these congregational choirs marked with a peculiar emphasis the elegant, feeling lines, running,

"Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks,
And make them fall."

The peaceful and childlike Moravians distinguished the day at the village where they have an establishment, by gay processions, the hoisting of flags, the singing of the above-named

Christian stanzas, prayers, sermons, and other demonstrations of loyal joy.

"A number of the inhabitants of Harlow, in Essex, on this day refused subscribing to entertain their poor; they had declared their intention of making a subscription for the poor of the parish in general on a future day; but they expressed their determination not to be dictated to; they disdained to add to the general delusion, by celebrating a Jubilee at a period when the nation, by the general system pursued, during the present reign, has been brought almost to the brink of ruin."

To render the state of representation in the House of Commons pure, much is necessary to be reformed on the part of the people. The system of electors as well as of the elected ought to be radically changed. Contested elections are generally managed at so enormous an expense, and have so degenerated into mere uninteresting party squabbles between rival aristocrats, that an honest man hesitates to risk his own independence by wasting his fortune in lavishing vast sums on such occasions; as he spurns the disreputable traffic of selling his vote in parliament, he disdains to purchase the vote of the venal elector, or to barter with the landlord for the voices of his dependent tenantry. In fact contested elections are become such nuisances, and are so destructive of good morals, and of every thing that bears the semblance of public virtue, that men scruple to become candidates, on the present terms, and electors refuse to qualify themselves by registering, that they may not be drawn into the vortex of an election conducted in the usual manner. Seeing virtuous independence can effect so little, and fearful of contamination from the vices of an election, they make a choice of evils, and prefer inactivity and apparent apathy to engaging in a contest, in which much is risked, and but little can be gained. But such a state of things ought not to exist. Representatives should be returned free of expense by an *unbribed and uninfluenced* people. In vain do electors call for purity in the representatives until they shall become them-

selves independent. A pure stream can only arise from a pure source, and if the people, the spring and fountain of all political power is corrupted, we unreasonably look for propriety in the higher departments. To a very considerable degree, the representative will ever be the mirror of the body he represents. As an antidote to the evils of elections, we mentioned in our last retrospect, the honourable example of the electors of Westminster returning Sir Francis Burdett free of all expense to parliament. As a worthy sequel we now give a late address to the freeholders of Essex, and recommend it as a model of true constitutional principles, which if adhered to, and generally followed, would go far towards restoring the purity of representation. We hope in a future number to state a favourable issue to so proper a mode of requesting.

To the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County of Essex.

GENTLEMEN,

Notwithstanding the meeting of gentlemen and freeholders, holden this day, in the independent interest of the county, would not pledge themselves to support me, because I refused to attach myself to any party, I feel undismayed in the arduous, but glorious contest, in which I am engaged, and am determined to persevere in my attempt to vindicate your rights of election against the supporters of that compromise which has long tarnished the representation of this county.

Consider the critical situation of the country. Behold the melancholy aspect of public affairs, and then ask yourselves whether a considerable part of our national misfortunes may not be attributed to the ambition of these contending parties, of Whig and Tory? In Essex and Maldon what has been your representation for the last forty years? I may perhaps claim the merit of being the instrument in your hands, of dividing the coalition for the present; but believe me, that the division is merely temporary. The snake is wounded, but not destroyed.

It remains with you to trample on this venomous serpent, which has stung the vital parts of the constitution; for without pure representation, what is it but a name? Confiding in your spirit and good sense, I am resolved to persevere as long as I have an independent vote ready to bring forward. But observe, whilst I am vindicating your independence, I will ne-

nor sacrifice my own. The cause is general—general must be the exertion. I will be at no expense; I will not buy you, because I will not sell you; but I will do more, for I will serve you honestly, and prove myself, Gentlemen, your faithful and obedient servant,

MONTAGU BURGOYNE.

Chelmsford, Jan. 8, 1810.

The spirit which has lately been aroused in the city of London appears to gain strength—the ministers having refused to permit the address of the Common Hall of the livery of London to be delivered to the king at the levee, but only through the medium of the Secretary of state's office, to be delivered, or cushioned at his option; another common hall has been held, at which were adopted some spirited resolutions (for which see documents) declarative of the right to petition, and returning thanks to the Lord Mayor and one of the Sheriffs for their conduct. They published the petition formerly agreed on, and directed a copy of the present resolutions to be given into the king's hands.

The metropolis is supported by the county of Berks, where at a meeting of the freeholders held at Abingdon, a spirited address to the king moved by Lord Folkstone was agreed on. In allusion to the answer to the city of London as to the competence of parliament to institute inquiries, they pointedly remark in the following terms:

"We presume to state to your majesty, that we have seen, for years past, with the deepest concern, that attempts to procure parliamentary inquiry upon the subject of our national misfortunes, have, in all cases, been unsuccessful; and in the course of the last session we witnessed with not less astonishment than indignation, that a system was adopted, and almost proclaimed, of protecting public men from public inquiry—a system which is in direct defiance of the uniform practice of the best periods of our history, and the most undoubted, and invaluable principles of the constitution."

A struggle is commenced against corruption by the people. May it be persevering and successful! The happiness of these countries is at stake.

Corruption is potent, and to increase the odds against the reform of abuses, apathy sits enthroned in "the Castle of Indolence"—We have once more recourse to the bards of other days to rouse the slumbering spirit of independence, as too many of our present race of poets, unlike their predecessors, are leagued on the side of power. We venture to use the words of Thomson appropriately describing the prevailing influence of corruption, apathy, luxury and selfishness, as at least equally applicable to our times, as to the days in which he wrote, and perhaps increasingly characteristic, as the progress of luxury is greater:

"Spread far and wide was his curst influence,
Of public virtue much he dull'd the sense,
Even much of private; ate our spirit out,
And fed our rank luxurious vices: whence
The land was overlaid with many a lout
Not as old Fame reports, wise, generous,
bold, and stout,
A rage of pleasure madden'd every breast,
Down to the lowest lees the ferment ran,
To his licentious wish, each must be blest,
With joy be fever'd; snatch it as he can,
Thus vice the standard rear'd; her arriercaban,
Corruption call'd, and loud she gave the word,
Mind, mind yourselves."——

Amid the innumerable difficulties which press on a distracted empire, a new source of danger arises from a mutiny among the native troops in India, headed by European officers. Already our possessions in the East have been productive of intolerable oppression to the natives, and besides of much evil to these countries, by the introduction of superfluous wealth, and the consequent luxury which has fatally attended. The influx of riches to a few individuals has had a powerful effect in enhancing the expenses of living, and given an appearance of an unreal prosperity in these countries. Thus we feel "this plethoric ill" to endanger the healthful constitution of the state. We are besides presented with the strange anomaly of a great commercial body possessing apparent wealth, and holding with the state in a divided and

ill ascertained partnership, large territorial possessions, while at the same time, they are annually borrowing large sums, and are in reality insolvent, and in a state very little short of bankruptcy. Let the present business be settled as it may, we venture to prognosticate that at no very distant period, the affairs of the East India company will, without a speedy and total change of system, involve our empire in alarming and perhaps inextricable difficulties. A refusal to renew the charter, and throwing open the trade to the public generally, may avert these evils. It would have probably been happy for us had our connection with the East never existed. Perhaps we might still have been a frugal people, unacquainted with the full extent of luxury, and not have bartered our independence for cumbrous wealth—Now our situation resembles that of the drunkard accustomed to his inordinate stimulus, unable to lay it aside without danger, and if continued, ready to sink under its effects. In our present state, we could ill bear the subtraction of the large revenue drawn from our trade with India, and yet our dangers are increased from this very source. Let us look around on every side, and gloomy prospects present. What a reverse in fifty brief years! Where are the grounds of Jubileeizing? Contrast 1760 with the present period, and we may say with the poet,

“ Fair laughs the morn and soft the zephyr
blows,
While proudly riding o’er the azure
realm,
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;
Youth on the prow, and pleasure at the
helm,
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind’s
sway,
That hush’d in grim repose, expects his
evening prey ” GRAY.

The parliament has met and ministry have been able to carry addresses without amendment in both houses. Until the strength of a minister is cautiously tried, the complaisance of parliament is well known. Sir George Saville, a steady patriot, and honest senator, in 1782 remarked in the house of commons, that if the king addressed parliament in the unmeaning

words of the song, “What beauties does Flora disclose?” the courtly answer would return “How sweet are her smiles upon Tweed.” It is however remarkable, that in the same session which opened, as Sir George Saville thus sarcastically observed, the minister of that day, Lord North, was in the course of it left in a minority, and finally deserted; and before its determination, that administration which entailed so much mischief on their country by their management of the American war was completely overthrown.

On the 23d inst. the debates were long, and opposition had not a difficult task to point out the errors of administration as to the disgraceful expeditions sent out by them, and their unprincipled disputes among themselves, but the debates partake too much of a dispute between two parties, while the interests of the people are neglected. We wish to see the *party of the people* prevail unconnected either with those, who are now in place, or those who as eagerly seek to oust them for their own emolument.

The veteran statesman, known by the name of Single-speech Hamilton, in his posthumous publication, called *Parliamentary Logic*, who was well skilled in all the arcana of parliamentary and ministerial manœuvring, and like his precursor, Bubb Donnington, afterwards Lord Melcombe, of blabbing memory, lets out some choice secrets, which a wise people will treasure up to assist them in their judgment of political characters, tells us “that politics is a kind of game, of which the stake or prize was the administration of the country, and hence one party might with great propriety adopt such measures as would tend to bring their friends into administration, without weighing in golden scales the merits of the question proposed, as few questions had arisen since the revolution, in which *an honest man might not have voted conscientiously on either side.*”—This is barefaced political latitudinarianism, which we fear is too common, but it deserves to be stamped with decided reprobation as leading to the greatest political profligacy. It is

impossible to foresee how matters will go on in the present session at this crisis which all must allow to be a period of unexampled difficulty. Will the people do their parts in demanding inquiry, or will they continue in apathy? Will the parliament approve themselves vigilant guardians of the public weal? Will the people and parliament go hand in hand, or in the words of a late able statesman, shall we have "a petitioning people, and an addressing parliament?" or will both neglect their duty? On the manner in which time shall give a solution to these queries, much, very much indeed depends.

IRELAND.

The Duke of Richmond, lord Lieutenant of Ireland makes frequent progresses through the country. His jovialities smooth his way and tend to remove prejudices. In a convivial hour at Limerick, he expressed liberal sentiments, towards our Catholic brethren. He has been requited for his condescension. The inhabitants of Newry previously to his arrival in that town, were summoned to consider of addressing him. In the spirit of returning unanimity, it was resolved not to address, as he belonged to an administration hostile to the claims of the Catholics. But his liberality at Limerick was remembered, another meeting was called, and an address was agreed on by both Protestants and Catholics, in which the removal of all restrictions was unequivocally alluded to. In his answer we are sorry to observe he took no notice of this part of the address. At Limerick he spoke *as the man*, at Newry, *as the minister*.

(For the address and answer, see the documents)

While the citizens of London have been laudably engaged in exertions to procure inquiries into the multiplied causes of our disastrous situation, the common council of Dublin, at their quarterly assembly, have been differently engaged. A resolution was brought forward to express their determination to resist the claims of the Catholics, which was rejected by 39 votes against 34. This triumph of liberality augurs well when compared with the former illiberal conduct of

that corporate body. So far is commendable, yet they are still silent on the momentous questions, which ought to operate on every patriotic breast, in the present awful crisis; and they appear far behind the citizens of London, in enlightened views. The festivities of the table ill compensate for the decay of public spirit, and of public virtue. The affability of a vice-regal court, and a round of city feasts, are poor substitutes for that noble independence, which is the essence of freedom, and causes a nation to be truly respectable, even if not possessed of a separate legislature.—It is fashionable with some to attribute all our political evils to the union. But whether that measure which was brought about by very profligate means, be in itself hurtful or not to us, enlarged patriotism and public spirit would enable us to surmount all difficulties. But alas! there is a miserable lack of these essential requisites to the welfare of a state. If independence of mind is wanting, no advantages of external situation, can compensate for its absence, nor no disadvantages can controul its powerful energies when it exists. It is independence of mind which we want.

"—Be firm, nor let corruption sly,
Twine round your heart, indissoluble
chains

Determin'd hold
Your independence, for that once de-
stroy'd,
Unfounded, Freedom is a morning dream
That flits ærial from the spreading eye."

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS.

SMITH, MAYOR.

In a meeting or assembly of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Liverymen of the several companies of the city of London, in Common-hall assembled, at the Guildhall of the said city, on Tuesday the 9th day of January 1810.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

1. That it is the undoubted right of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Livery of the city of London, to present their petitions to the King, sitting upon his throne, that out of personal feelings towards their Sovereign they did at the last Common Hall, waive the exercise of this right.

2. Resolved unanimously—That it appears that the Secretary of state informed